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WEINGARTEN, SCHURGIN, GAGNEBIN & LEBOVICI LLP TEN POST OFFICE SQUARE BOSTON, MA 02109				
			EXAMINER CHEN, CHONGSHAN	
			ART UNIT 2162	PAPER NUMBER

DATE MAILED: 01/25/2005

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/842,370

Applicant(s)

WIESLER ET AL.

Examiner

Chongshan Chen

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2162

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 17 September 2004.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-33 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-33 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

1. This action is responsive to Amendment filed on 17 September 2004. Claims 1-33 are pending.

Response to Arguments

2. Applicant's arguments, filed on 17 September 2004, with respect to the rejection(s) of claim(s) 1-3, 11, 15-22 and 30 under 103(a) have been fully considered and are persuasive. Therefore, the rejection has been withdrawn. However, upon further consideration, a new ground(s) of rejection is made in view of Goh et al. (US 6,466,945 B1). Please see the detailed rejection below.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

3. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

4. Claims 1-3, 11, 15-22 and 30 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lambson et al. (hereinafter "Lambson", "Automated reticle transport and stepper loading", Solid State Technology, V39, n10, p97, Oct. 1996, ISSN: 0038-111X) in view of Goh et al. (hereinafter "Goh", US 6,466,945 B1).

As per claim 1, Lambson discloses an apparatus for managing data corresponding to a plurality of reticles in a semiconductor manufacturing system comprising:

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a stocker including a stocker database, a stocker controller communicably coupled to the stocker database and communicably coupled to the reticle management controller, and a plurality of storage locations configured and arranged to store at least one of the plurality of reticles, the stocker controller being configured and arranged to store at least a portion of the data corresponding to the at least one of the plurality of reticles stored within the plurality of storage locations within the stocker database (Lambson, page 1-5),

wherein the data associated with the plurality of reticles includes first and second data, portions of the first data being associated with respective ones of the plurality of reticles, and portions of the second data being associated with more than one of the plurality of reticles (Lambson, page 1-5).

Lambson does not explicitly disclose a central reticle database configured and arranged to store data associated with the plurality of reticles; a reticle management controller communicably coupled to the central reticle database, the reticle management controller configured and arranged to store data in the central reticle database, and to retrieve data from the central reticle database; wherein the reticle management controller is configured and arranged to retrieve at least a portion of the first and second data stored within the central reticle database and to provide the retrieved data portion to the stocker controller, the stocker controller being configured and arranged to store the retrieved data portion within the stocker database, and wherein the reticle management controller is further configured and arranged to manipulate and to maintain the plurality of reticles based on one or more portions of the second data associated with more than one of the plurality of reticles. Goh discloses a central reticle database configured and arranged to store data associated with the plurality of reticles; a reticle

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management controller communicably coupled to the central reticle database, the reticle management controller configured and arranged to store data in the central reticle database, and to retrieve data from the central reticle database; wherein the reticle management controller is configured and arranged to retrieve at least a portion of the first and second data stored within the central reticle database and to provide the retrieved data portion to the stocker controller, the stocker controller being configured and arranged to store the retrieved data portion within the stocker database, and wherein the reticle management controller is further configured and arranged to manipulate and to maintain the plurality of reticles based on one or more portions of the second data associated with more than one of the plurality of reticles (Goh, col. 3, lines 12-56). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the semiconductor manufacturing system of Lambson by incorporating a central reticle database as disclosed by Goh (Goh, col. 3, lines 12-56). The motivation being to enable the semiconductor manufacture to store reticle information in a central database for easy management.

As per claim 2, Lambson and Goh teach all the claimed subject matters as discussed in claim 1, and further disclose the portions of the first data corresponding to each of the plurality of reticles stored in the central reticle database includes a plurality of reticle identifying data (Goh, col. 3, lines 12-56).

As per claim 3, Lambson and Goh teach all the claimed subject matters as discussed in claim 2, and further disclose the plurality of reticle identifying data includes an attribute identifying the reticle; an attribute identifying the location of the reticle (Goh, col. 3, lines 12-56).



As per claim 11, Lambson and Goh teach all the claimed subject matters as discussed in claim 1, and further disclose a central system database configured and arranged to store portions of the second data corresponding to system requirements of the plurality of reticles, wherein the reticle management controller is communicably coupled to the central system database, the reticle management controller being configured and arranged to store and to retrieve the system data from the central system database (Goh, col. 3, lines 12-56).

As per claim 15, Lambson and Goh teach all the claimed subject matters as discussed in claim 1, and further disclose a plurality of stockers, each of the plurality of stockers including a stocker controller communicably coupled to the reticle management controller, a stocker database, and a plurality of storage locations configured and arranged to store at least one of the plurality of reticles, the stocker controller configured and arranged to collect at least a portion of the first and second data, and to store the at least a portion of the first and second data within the stocker database, wherein the reticle management controller is configured and arranged to receive at least a portion of the first and second data from each of the plurality of stocker controllers, and to provide at least a portion of the first and second data to each of the plurality of stocker controllers (Lambson, page 1-5).

As per claim 16, Lambson discloses an apparatus for managing a plurality of reticles in a semiconductor manufacturing system comprising:

a stocker unit including a stocker database, a stocker controller communicably coupled to the stocker database and communicably couple to the reticle management controller, and a plurality of storage locations configured and arranged to store at least one of the plurality of reticles (Lambson, page 1-5),

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wherein the data corresponding to the plurality of reticles includes first and second data, portions of the first data corresponding to respective ones of the plurality of reticles, and portions of the second data corresponding to more than one of the plurality of reticles (Lambson, page 1-5);

wherein the reticle management controller is configured and arranged to retrieve at least a portion of the first and second data stored within the central reticle database and to provide the retrieved data portion to the stocker controller, the stocker controller being configured and arranged to store the retrieved data portion within the stocker database (Lambson, page 1-5);

a reticle moving system communicably coupled to the reticle management controller, the reticle moving system being configured and arranged to load a reticle at a respective stocker unit and to deliver the loaded reticle to a destination (Lambson, page 1-2),

wherein the reticle management controller is configured and arranged to provide one or more move commands to the reticle move system, the reticle move system being configured and arranged to receive the one or more move commands and being operative to execute the one or more move commands (Lambson, page 1-2).

Lambson does not explicitly disclose a central reticle database configured and arranged to store data corresponding to the plurality of reticles; a reticle management controller communicably coupled to the central reticle database, the reticle management controller configured and arranged to store data in the central reticle database, and to retrieve data from the central database. Goh teaches a central reticle database configured and arranged to store data corresponding to the plurality of reticles; a reticle management controller communicably coupled to the central reticle database, the reticle management controller configured and arranged to store

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data in the central reticle database, and to retrieve data from the central database (Goh, col. 3, lines 12-56). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the semiconductor manufacturing system of Lambson by incorporating a central reticle database as disclosed by Goh (Goh, col. 3, lines 12-56). The motivation being to enable the semiconductor manufacture to store reticle information in a central database for easy management.

As per claim 17, Lambson and Goh teach all the claimed subject matters as discussed in claim 16, and further disclose the one or more move commands includes a command to store at a second stocker unit a reticle currently stored at a first stocker unit (Lambson, page 1-2).

As per claim 18, Lambson and Goh teach all the claimed subject matters as discussed in claim 16, and further disclose the one or more move commands includes a command to retrieve a reticle from a respective stocker unit (Lambson, page 1-2).

As per claim 19, Lambson and Goh teach all the claimed subject matters as discussed in claim 16, and further disclose the one or more move commands includes a command to retrieve a reticle from a respective stocker unit, to move the reticle to a first stocker unit different from the respective stocker unit, and to store the reticle at the first stocker unit (Lambson, page 1-2).

As per claim 20, Lambson teaches an apparatus for managing data corresponding to a plurality of reticles in a semiconductor manufacturing system comprising:

a reticle database configured and arranged to store data associated with the plurality of reticles (Lambson, page 1-5); and

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a reticle management controller communicably coupled to the reticle database, the reticle management controller configured and arranged to store data in the central reticle database, and to retrieve data from the reticle database (Lambson, page 1-5),

wherein the data associated with the plurality of reticles includes first and second data, portions of the first data being associated with respective ones of the plurality of reticles, and portions of the second data being associated with more than one of the plurality of reticles (Lambson, page 1-5).

Lambson does not explicitly disclose the reticle database is a central reticle database. Goh discloses a central database in a semiconductor system (Goh, col. 3, lines 12-56). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the semiconductor manufacturing system of Lambson by incorporating a central reticle database as disclosed by Goh (Goh, col. 3, lines 12-56). The motivation being to enable the semiconductor manufacture to store reticle information in a central database for easy management.

Claims 21-22 are rejected on grounds corresponding to the reasons given above for claims 2-3.

Claim 30 is rejected on grounds corresponding to the reasons given above for claim 11.

5. Claims 4-10, 12-14, 23-29 and 31-33 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lambson et al. (hereinafter "Lambson", "Automated reticle transport and stepper loading", Solid State Technology, V39, n10, p97, Oct. 1996, ISSN: 0038-111X) in view of Goh et al. (hereinafter "Goh", US 6,466,945 B1) and further in view of "PRI Automation Announces New Combination Reticle Stocker", ("PRI", PR Newswire, p9143, Oct 26, 1999).

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As per claim 4, Lambson and Goh teach all the claimed subject matters as discussed in claim 3, except for explicitly disclosing an attribute identifying a reticle carrier housing the reticle; an attribute identifying a the date and time the reticle was entered into use; and an attribute identifying a user identifier who created the reticle. PRI discloses a reticle management system for complete reticle lifecycle management (PRI, page 1-2, "The Combination Reticle Stocker can be integrated with PRI's TransNet(TM) Reticle Management System (TRMS) for complete reticle lifecycle management. The TRMS is a fab-wide, Web-enabled software control system that manages usage, kitting and unkitting, delivery and maintenance of reticles. The TRMS also integrate configurable business rules for optimized inventory control ..."). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the Lambson and Goh's combined reticle management system by incorporating attributes such as an attribute identifying a reticle carrier housing the reticle; an attribute identifying a the date and time the reticle was entered into use; and an attribute identifying a user identifier who created the reticle in the reticle management system. The motivation being to track the reticle lifecycle information for better management and maintenance of the reticle.

As per claim 5, Lambson and Goh teach all the claimed subject matters as discussed in claim 1, except for explicitly disclosing the portions of the first data corresponding to each of the plurality of reticles stored in the central reticle database includes a plurality of reticle history data. PRI discloses the data corresponding to each of the plurality of reticles stored in the central reticle database includes a plurality of reticle history data (PRI, page 1-2). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to

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modify the Lambson and Goh's combined reticle management system by incorporating reticle history data as disclosed by PRI. The motivation being to track the reticle lifecycle information for better management and maintenance of the reticle.

As per claim 6, Lambson and Goh teach all the claimed subject matters as discussed in claim 1, except for explicitly disclosing an attribute identifying the number of times the reticle has been retrieved; an attribute identifying the date the reticle was last retrieved; an attribute identifying the number of times the reticle has been stored; and an attribute identifying the date the reticle was last stored. PRI discloses a reticle management system for complete reticle lifecycle management (PRI, page 1-2). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the Lambson and Goh's combined reticle management system by incorporating attributes such as an attribute identifying the number of times the reticle has been retrieved; an attribute identifying the date the reticle was last retrieved; an attribute identifying the number of times the reticle has been stored; and an attribute identifying the date the reticle was last stored. The motivation being to track the reticle lifecycle information for better management and maintenance of the reticle.

As per claim 7, Lambson and Goh teach all the claimed subject matters as discussed in claim 1, except for explicitly disclosing an attribute identifying a user identifier who last selected the reticle; and an attribute identifying a user identifier who last stored the reticle. PRI discloses a reticle management system for complete reticle lifecycle management (PRI, page 1-2). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the Lambson and Goh's combined reticle management system by incorporating attributes such as an attribute identifying a user identifier who last selected the

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reticle; and an attribute identifying a user identifier who last stored the reticle. The motivation being to track the reticle lifecycle information for better management and maintenance of the reticle.

As per claim 8, Lambson and Goh teach all the claimed subject matters as discussed in claim 1, except for explicitly disclosing the data corresponding to each of the plurality of reticles stored in the central reticle database includes a plurality of reticle maintenance data. PRI discloses the data corresponding to each of the plurality of reticles stored in the central reticle database includes a plurality of reticle maintenance data (PRI, page 1-2). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the Lambson and Goh's combined reticle management system by incorporating reticle maintenance data as disclosed by PRI. The motivation being to track the reticle lifecycle information for better management and maintenance of the reticle.

As per claim 9, Lambson and Goh teach all the claimed subject matters as discussed in claim 8, except for explicitly disclosing a plurality of reticle maintenance data includes: an attribute identifying the number of times the reticle has been cleaned; an attribute identifying the date on which the reticle was last cleaned; an attribute identifying the number of times the reticle was inspected; and an attribute identifying the date on which the reticle was last inspected. PRI discloses a reticle management system for complete reticle lifecycle management (PRI, page 1-2). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the Lambson and Goh's combined reticle management system by incorporating attributes such as an attribute identifying the number of times the reticle has been cleaned; an attribute identifying the date on which the reticle was last cleaned; an

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attribute identifying the number of times the reticle was inspected; and an attribute identifying the date on which the reticle was last inspected. The motivation being to track the reticle lifecycle information for better management and maintenance of the reticle.

As per claim 10, Lambson and Goh teach all the claimed subject matters as discussed in claim 9, except for explicitly disclosing an attribute identifying a user identifier who last cleaned the reticle; an attribute identifying a location where the reticle was last cleaned; an attribute identifying a user identifier who last inspected the reticle; and an attribute identifying a location where the reticle was last inspected. PRI discloses a reticle management system for complete reticle lifecycle management and reticle cleaning (PRI, page 1-2). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the Lambson and Goh's combined reticle management system by incorporating attributes such as an attribute identifying a user identifier who last cleaned the reticle; an attribute identifying a location where the reticle was last cleaned; an attribute identifying a user identifier who last inspected the reticle; and an attribute identifying a location where the reticle was last inspected. The motivation being to track the reticle lifecycle information for better management and maintenance of the reticle.

As per claim 12, Lambson and Goh teach all the claimed subject matters as discussed in claim 11, except for explicitly disclosing an attribute identifying the maximum number of cleanings of a reticle; an attribute identifying the maximum number of inspections of a reticle; an attribute identifying the maximum number of uses of a reticle between inspections; and an attribute identifying the maximum number of uses of a reticle between cleaning. PRI discloses a reticle management system for complete reticle lifecycle management and reticle cleaning (PRI,

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page 1-2). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the Lambson and Goh's combined reticle management system by incorporating attributes such as an attribute identifying the maximum number of cleanings of a reticle; an attribute identifying the maximum number of inspections of a reticle; an attribute identifying the maximum number of uses of a reticle between inspections; and an attribute identifying the maximum number of uses of a reticle between cleaning. The motivation being to track the reticle lifecycle information for better management and maintenance of the reticle.

As per claim 13, Lambson and Goh teach all the claimed subject matters as discussed in claim 11, except for explicitly disclosing an attribute identifying the maximum time between inspections of a bare reticle; and an attribute identifying the maximum time between cleanings of a bare reticle. PRI discloses a reticle management system for complete reticle lifecycle management and reticle cleaning (PRI, page 1-2). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the Lambson and Goh's combined reticle management system by incorporating attributes such as an attribute identifying the maximum time between inspections of a bare reticle; and an attribute identifying the maximum time between cleanings of a bare reticle. The motivation being to track the reticle lifecycle information for better management and maintenance of the reticle.

As per claim 14, Lambson and Goh teach all the claimed subject matters as discussed in claim 11, except for explicitly disclosing an attribute identifying the maximum time between inspections of a kitted reticle; and an attribute identifying the maximum time between cleanings of a kitted reticle. PRI discloses a reticle management system for complete reticle lifecycle management and reticle cleaning (PRI, page 1-2). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one

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of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the Lambson and Goh's combined reticle management system by incorporating attributes such as an attribute identifying the maximum time between inspections of a kitted reticle; and an attribute identifying the maximum time between cleanings of a kitted reticle. The motivation being to track the reticle lifecycle information for better management and maintenance of the reticle.

Claims 23-29 are rejected on grounds corresponding to the reasons given above for claims 4-10.

Claims 31-33 are rejected on grounds corresponding to the reasons given above for claims 12-14.

Conclusion

6. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

La et al. (5,761,064) disclose a defect management system for productivity and yield improvement.

Assessment of the performance of a reticle stocker with integrated database and the productivity gain obtained in a submicron ASIC waferfab,

<http://www.sea.rl.ac.uk/OldSEA/oldpubs/Retimatic/>

Denise Dillon Harris, Automated Reticle Management Increases Efficiency, Throughput, and Capital Investment Utilization,

<http://www.semiconductorfabtech.com/features/lithography/articles/body3.195.php3>


Contact Information

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Chongshan Chen whose telephone number is (571)272-4031. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday - Friday (8:00 am - 4:30 pm).

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, John E Breene can be reached on (571)272-4107. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

Chongshan Chen
January 19, 2005


JEAN M. CORRIELUS
PRIMARY EXAMINER